
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2567
Author: Celeste Rodriguez
Version: March 26, 2026
Urgency: No
Consultant: Naima Ford Antal

Hearing Date: June 29, 2026
Fiscal: Yes

Subject: CalWORKs: immediate assistance

SUMMARY

This bill requires a county to make a determination of apparent eligibility for a California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) applicant when applying for immediate need or homeless assistance, without requiring them to seek other potentially available income first.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which permits states to implement the program under a state plan. (*42 United States Code 601 et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes the CalWORKs program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through the federal TANF program. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state, county, and federal TANF funds. (*Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11200 et seq.*)
- 3) Requires families to be grouped into “assistance units” for the purposes of determining eligibility and computing the amount of aid payment in CalWORKs. (*WIC 11450.16*)
- 4) Establishes income, asset, and real property limits used to determine eligibility for the CalWORKs program and grant amounts based on family size and county of residence. (*WIC 11150-11160, 11450 et seq.*)
- 5) Permits a county to provide an applicant for CalWORKs with immediate financial assistance if the family’s total available liquid resources, both nonexempt and exempt, are less than \$100 and there is an emergency situation, whether foreseeable or not. (*WIC 11266 (a)*)

- 6) Permits an allowance for nonrecurring special needs for homeless assistance to a family that is homeless and seeking shelter when the family is a CalWORKs recipient or eligible for CalWORKs. (*WIC 11450(f)*)
- 7) Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to award funds to counties for the purpose of providing CalWORKs housing supports to CalWORKs recipients who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Supports may include, but are not limited to, financial assistance, including rental assistance, security deposits, utility payments, moving cost assistance, and motel and hotel vouchers, housing stabilization and relocation, including outreach and engagement, landlord recruitment, case management, housing search and placement, legal services, and credit repair. (*WIC 11330.5*)

This Bill:

- 1) Defines “unconditionally available income” to mean income that comes from unemployment insurance benefits, social security benefits, veterans’ benefits, or state disability insurance benefits.
- 2) Requires a county to make a determination of apparent eligibility for CalWORKs immediate need assistance or homeless assistance without requiring the applicant apply for any unconditionally available income the applicant does not currently receive as a prerequisite to making the determination.
- 3) Provides that no appropriation will be made to implement the bill.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) CDSS estimates General Fund (GF) costs of \$1.7 million for 100 families to \$12.9 million for 1,000 families in the first year, and \$2.5 million GF for 100 families to \$24.8 million for 1,000 families annually ongoing to require counties to make an immediate determination for apparent eligibility for immediate assistance and homeless assistance for CalWORKs applicants.

California's annual \$3.7 billion federal TANF block grant can be used flexibly within the CalWORKs program. It is fully allocated within the existing and proposed state budgets. As such, new costs for the CalWORKs program are considered GF cost impacts. State GF costs may be mitigated to the extent TANF funding is not fully expended in any particular year, or if one of the CalWORKs Subaccounts has sufficient revenue available to support grant costs.

- 2) CDSS estimates one-time GF automation costs of \$494,500 for updates to California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS).

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill:

According to the author, “CalWORKs immediate assistance is meant to help families facing urgent crises meet their basic needs without delay. Yet in practice, some applicants are required to first pursue other income they are not currently receiving before counties determine their eligibility for emergency aid. For families with little or no cash on hand, even short delays can mean going without food, housing, utilities, diapers, or other essentials.

AB 2567 streamlines access to emergency CalWORKs assistance by clarifying that counties must determine a family’s apparent eligibility based on the information available at the time of application, without first requiring applicants to apply for other potential income. By removing unnecessary barriers and delays, this bill helps ensure families can quickly access the support they need to stay safe, stable, and meet their basic needs during times of crisis.”

CalWORKs

As California’s version of the federal TANF program, CalWORKs is the state’s largest anti-poverty program. CalWORKs provides temporary cash assistance aimed at moving children out of poverty and helping qualified low-income families meet their basic needs, such as rent, clothing, utility bills, food, and other items needed to ensure children are cared for at home and safely remain with their families. In addition to cash assistance, adult CalWORKs recipients are provided education, employment, and training services designed to help remove barriers to work and promote self-sufficiency. These services are typically outlined in a welfare-to-work plan. CDSS is the designated state agency responsible for program supervision at the state level, and counties are responsible for administering the program at the local level.

CalWORKs is funded through federal, state, county and realignments funds. The federal government gives the state a TANF block grant and CalWORKs receives a majority of that allocation. California and local governments spend a maintenance-of-effort amount as well as required by federal law. The state also uses General Fund money for state-only programs and provides counties with a single allocation to fund many CalWORKs services. Funds from the 1991 realignment are also used to fund assistance payments and are part of the single allocation.

Eligibility for CalWORKs is based on family size, income level, and region. Counties are also required to review a family’s anticipated income, like child support, and potential income, such as social security or veterans benefits they are eligible for. Families must show economic hardship through income and asset tests and participation in the program is also time limited. Adults are only allowed to use CalWORKs for 60 months in their lifetime. Children of adults who receive cash aid can continue to receive benefits only until they are 18 years old in California.

Potentially Available Income

There are a number of steps a county must take to verify an applicant is eligible for CalWORKs and how much aid they should receive. This includes reviewing their potentially available income. Potentially available income is defined in the CDSS Eligibility and Assistance Standards

Manual section 44-103 as income available to the applicant or recipient from potential sources, including, but not limited to:

- Social Insurance, *i.e.* Railroad Retirement, Unemployment Insurance, Disability Insurance.
- Benefits available to veterans of military service, members of military service, their spouses, and their dependents.
- Rights and interests in real and personal property.
- Responsible relatives who may be contributing or have a legal liability to contribute.
- Other persons who may be contributing.
- Private pension plans, union welfare funds, life insurance disability benefits, and other forms of assistance.

A county must require applicants to seek these sources of income which can factor into a family's CalWORKs eligibility and aid determination. This bill would prohibit a county from requiring an applicant to seek other income before being determined eligible solely for immediate need or homeless assistance if they are apparently eligible.

CalWORKs Immediate Need Assistance

During certain emergency situations a CalWORKs applicant can qualify for an advance on their benefits. An immediate need request can be made at the time of the CalWORKs application or by a verbal or written indication of an emergency situation after the CalWORKs application has been submitted. A determination of eligibility for immediate need assistance must be made no later than the next working day following receipt of the request.

In order to be eligible for an immediate need payment, the applicant must be eligible for CalWORKs, have an emergency situation, without regard to whether it could have been anticipated, not have other liquid assets they can use, and fulfills other required conditions of eligibility. An emergency situation is defined as:

- Lack of Housing: The applicant is homeless.
- Pending Eviction: The applicant has received any type of eviction notice, including a three-day notice to pay or quit, evicting the family from its current residence.
- Lack of Food: The applicant does not have enough food to sustain the family for a period of three calendar days.
- Utility Shutoff Notice: The applicant has received notice of termination of utility service, or such service has been terminated.

- Transportation: The applicant is unable to meet essential transportation needs such as those relating to food, medical care, or job opportunities.
- Clothing: The applicant lacks essential clothing, such as diapers or clothing needed for inclement weather.
- Other: The applicant has other emergencies of similar importance to the family's immediate health and safety.

The applicant must also be “apparently eligible,” which means that through the information provided on a CalWORKs Statement of Facts presented to the county and other information available to the county, the applicant would be eligible for aid if the information on the Statement of Facts were verified.¹ According to California regulations, applicants for immediate need assistance must also comply with the technical conditions for CalWORKs including applying for unconditionally available income.² This bill would allow CalWORKs recipients and CalWORKs eligible families to receive immediate financial assistance based on their apparent eligibility and not required to apply for other forms of income before being approved for immediate assistance.

CalWORKs Homeless Assistance

The CalWORKs Homeless Assistance Program is an entitlement program that provides either temporary homeless assistance or permanent homeless assistance to people who are recipients of CalWORKs aid or eligible for aid. For temporary assistance, families can receive between \$85 and \$145 per day to pay for the cost of temporary shelter, like hotel or motel costs. Families can also receive permanent assistance to help a family secure housing or prevent eviction. These costs can include providing security deposit costs, including last month's rent, or providing up to two months of rent arrearages. Families can receive either one or both forms of assistance once in a 12-month period. The assistance is available for families that are experiencing homelessness, defined as lacking a “fixed and regular nighttime residence” but also includes families at risk of homelessness as evidenced by receipt of a notice to pay rent or quit.

There are exceptions to the 12-month time limit for certain groups. For example, in 2020, SB 1065 (*Chapter 152, Statutes of 2020*) expanded homeless assistance for victims of domestic abuse by providing up to 32 days of temporary homeless assistance to applicants or recipients of CalWORKs who provide a sworn statement of past or present domestic abuse and who are fleeing their abuser. Other exceptions include a medically verified physical or mental illness, uninhabitability of the former residence caused by sudden or unusual circumstances, or state or federally declared disasters that are a direct and primary cause of homelessness (including COVID-19).³ The need for homeless assistance is clear. Program data shows a high rate of homelessness among CalWORKs families—approximately 15% of the CalWORKs caseload requested homelessness assistance at some point in 2024-25. Counties are encouraged to also connect families that receive homeless assistance with the CalWORKs Housing Support Program if they are eligible. This bill would allow CalWORKs recipients and CalWORKs

¹ CalWORKs Eligibility and Standards Manual 40-129

² CalWORKs Eligibility and Standards Manual 40-129.214

³ www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Housing/CalWORKs%20Homeless%20Assistance%20Program.pdf

eligible families to receive homeless assistance based on their apparent eligibility and not required to apply for other forms of income before being approved for homeless assistance.

Related/Prior Legislation:

SB 1415 (Glazer, Chapter 798, Statutes of 2024) requires counties to include any amount of income regularly received or that will be regularly received to calculate an assistance unit’s total monthly household income when determining eligibility for permanent homeless assistance.

SB 1083 (Skinner, Chapter 715, Statutes of 2022) authorizes a county to require participation in a homelessness avoidance case plan only if the county has also provided a housing navigation caseworker who can assist with securing permanent housing and housing case management services. It additionally provides that a family is considered homeless if they receive any notice that could lead to an eviction, and would clarify that roommate, as described above, also includes, but is not limited to, a parent or child with whom they were living.

SB 1065 (Hertzberg, Chapter 152, Statutes of 2020) makes a series of changes to the CalWORKs Homeless Assistance Program including the requirement that a family use all available liquid resources in excess of \$100 in order for a family to be entitled to receive an allowance for nonrecurring special needs does not apply to CalWORKs homeless assistance and deleting the requirement that the family demonstrate that the eviction is the result of a verified financial hardship as a result of extraordinary circumstances beyond their control, and not other lease or rental violations.

COMMENTS

This bill allows a CalWORKs applicant or beneficiary to receive CalWORKs immediate assistance or homeless assistance without applying for other sources of income first. People apply for these types of assistance because they are in an emergency situation. Being required to apply for other forms of long-term cash aid like unemployment insurance or social security can cause the emergency to become worse and increase their overall need. This bill would remove one potential barrier for people trying to get this vital aid by ensuring they are not required to apply for other aid before being approved if they are otherwise qualified.

PRIOR VOTES

Assembly Floor:	66 - 5
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	12 - 1
Assembly Human Services Committee:	6 - 1

POSITIONS

Support:

County Welfare Directors Association of California (Co-Sponsor)
Western Center on Law & Poverty (Co-Sponsor)
California Family Resource Association
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
Child Abuse Prevention Center and its Affiliates Safe Kids California, Prevent Child Abuse
California and the California Family Resource Association; the
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations (CCWRO)
County of Humboldt
County of Riverside
End Child Poverty California Powered by Grace
Los Angeles County
Parent Voices
SEIU California

Oppose:

None received

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